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BETTER PLANTS

God's first gift to man was a Beautiful Garden



VOLUME II

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MRS. BERTRAND H. FARR

INTRODUCING OUR NEW PRESIDENT

A special meeting of the board of directors of the Bertrand H. Farr-Wyomissing Nurseries Company was called on Wednesday, November 6, 1924, to take action on the death of Mr. Farr, the esteemed founder and president of the organization, and to elect a successor.

In the election of Anna Willis Farr as President, the board congratulates itself, and the friends and customers of the Company, believing that an able successor to our beloved chief has been secured.

In the early days, when Mr. Farr was building up the business, Mrs. Farr devoted many long hours to tedious details. She became actively interested in office and field operations, and Mr. Farr sought her advice and relied on her counsel in many of his undertakings.

Even after the incorporation of the Company, with larger office and field forces, Mrs. Farr's interest never waned. New office methods, advanced field operations, experiments and crossings for improved varieties, aroused her keen enthusiasm.

Mrs. Farr again assumes an active part in the organization. The entire staff feels that her interest will inspire them to even greater efforts to carry out the ideals of the leader who has passed on, and that under her direction the organization will continue to produce "Better Plants—by Farr."

Our Tribute to Our Chief

SUCCESS came to Mr. Farr because of his sincerity and idealism, which won for him a host of friends and admirers.

Recognizing these sterling qualities as essential to good business, we shall endeavor, at all times, to continue in a manner which will reflect credit to his memory.

We who were fortunate enough to be associated with Mr. Farr, pledge our assistance to Mrs. Farr in the continuation of the hopes and dreams of our late Chief's life work.

THE FARR ORGANIZATION

WHILE we shall undoubtedly miss Mr. Farr's genius and guidance, I feel sure that with the assistance of the efficient organization which he has perfected, I can safely promise that the principles, policies, and ideals as established for this Company will be continued.

Anna Farr

(MRS. BERTRAND H. FARR)

NOTED PLANTSMAN PASSES AWAY

Bertrand H. Farr, President of Wyomissing Nurseries Dies Suddenly at His Home

Originated and Introduced Many Wonderful Irises, Peonies and Other Perennials

BERTRAND H. FARR, nationally known figure and authority in the modern horticultural world, died at his home, 118 Wyomissing Boulevard, Wyomissing, Penna., on the morning of October 11th. Death was the result of an abnormal blood pressure which developed on October 6th, and culminated in cerebral hemorrhage.

Funeral services were held at the Farr home on Monday, Oct. 13th. Throngs of friends and business associates, including members of the Men's Club of the First Presbyterian Church, and the employees of the Farr Nurseries, were present. The Rev. Dr. Robert Marshall Blackburn, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, of which Mr. Farr was a member officiated. Sympathetic messages and telegrams were

received from floriculturists all over the country who were unable to attend.

Interment was made on Wednesday, Oct. 15th at Webster City, Iowa, the boyhood home of Mr. Farr.

Among the many floral tributes was a large blanket composed entirely of hardy flowers, which were Mr. Farr's favorites and which were assembled from the nursery.

Mr. Farr is survived by his wife, Anna Willis Farr, and his sister, Mrs. J. O. Crawford, of Chicago, Illinois.

Sketch of Deceased

Mr. Farr was born October 14, 1863, at Windham, Vt. When he was only five years of age, his parents moved west; first

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Bertrand H. Farr—the Wyomissing Man

to Wisconsin, where for three years they lived at Lake Geneva, and later at Rochester, near Milwaukee. Here he formed his first associations with peonies by acquiring a single root of the old-fashioned red from his aunt, for the performance of an errand. In his biography he refers to this as his first peony, the forerunner of the many thousand peonies which he came to collect and possess later.

Shortly afterward the family emigrated to Webster City, Iowa, where his father established a cattle farm on the wild, but beautiful, prairie. In one of Mr. Farr's famous catalogs he refers to this prairie as the environment which instilled in him the love of plants and nature.

Becomes a School Teacher

After attending high school and seminary, Mr. Farr obtained a teacher's certificate at the age of seventeen. His mother, in the meantime, had bought a piano and he had taken some lessons. In a short time, he came to be considered a musical prodigy. As related in his biography, he was sent to the New England Conservatory of Music for two years. While in Boston Mr. Farr was a perpetual visitor at Hovey's place, every spare minute being spent among that rare collection of plants. In 1885 he returned to Webster City to establish a music business. A few years later, he sold the business with the intention of coming east to complete his education at Boston. Upon his arrival there, he accepted an offer to go with a music house in Philadelphia, where he remained for five years. His business trips occasionally brought him to Reading and in course of time he established a music business in that city.

First Wyomissing Resident

In 1896, Mr. Farr purchased the present home site and erected the first residence in Wyomissing. Here he, at last, had room to start a real garden, and after many

years he could say "Blessed is he who has a hobby, and can make it his business." He began to collect all the varieties of peonies and irises which were then in existence. Gradually his collection grew famous, and visitors began to arrive from all parts of the country. It was then that the hobby became his business—and he was supremely happy. Orders for plants from his collection began to increase in number, until the plant business encroached on the music business. Finally, he sold the music business, and from then on devoted his entire time to the production and distribution of hardy plants. Not long did he confine himself to peonies and irises. He soon acquired additional land in Wyomissing and increased his collections to include standard and novelty varieties of other perennials, roses, dahlias, shrubs, trees and evergreens.

Business Incorporated

The details of the business became so numerous and involved that in 1916 the business became incorporated with a capitalization of \$150,000. Additional land was purchased and the nursery proper was established. From this period until 1924 the business increased in volume and reputation.

As far back as 1908, Mr. Farr was an important member of a committee which spent several summers at Cornell University for the purpose of classifying the 2,700 varieties of peonies which at that time were hopelessly duplicated and confused. His knowledge of peonies and irises produced an increasing demand for articles on the subjects, resulting in Mr. Farr preparing many articles for garden magazines, text books and daily papers.

At various times and for many years he was president of the American Peony Society and the American Iris Society. His opinions on plant matters were sought and accepted by horticultural authorities and writers throughout the world, as many letters on file with foreign postmarks give evidence. For many years, and until the time of his death, hardly a month went by without a request from some garden club for a lecture. Mr. Farr was able to accept most of these requests and even at the time of his death, he was scheduled for such lectures.

Creates New Varieties

Not content with the many varieties in existence, Mr. Farr began to develop new varieties by hybridization and cross-pollination. His chief accomplishments were some two score varieties of irises which he carefully selected and named from thousands of seedlings, and which have been accepted and listed in catalogs issued by other growers throughout the world. His developments were also extended to peonies, delphiniums, columbines, and gaillardias. Even now there are many new irises and hemerocallis which are to be introduced during 1925.

New Location for Nursery

During 1923 a new nursery location was obtained by purchasing the Conrad Weiser homestead, Womelsdorf, Penna. Planting operations on the new site were begun in fall of 1923, and will be com-

pleted early in 1926. Business is being conducted, in the meantime, on the Wyomissing premises. In recent years Mr. Farr assembled and perfected a working organization, so that he might be free to devote more of his time to hybridization and to technical plant matters. This organization will continue to carry on the business.

The Late Elbert Hubbard's Tribute

Elbert Hubbard, author of "The Message to Garcia," editor of *The Fra* and victim of the Lusitania tragedy, once wrote the following in his magazine *The Fra*.

"In many families time is reckoned from 'when Johnny was born,' or 'when little Willie died,' or 'when we were married.'

"Thoreau dated events from 'when the blue-fringed genetian bloomed,' 'when the *Simplocarpus foetidus* first called the bees to get fresh honey,' 'when the meadow-larks came back.' Yes, the sturdy, strong, heroic, manly Thoreau lived in fairyland.

"Bertrand H. Farr is a man of the Thoreau type; only where Thoreau was content to admire and describe, Farr must evolve and make the beautiful even more beautiful."

EXPRESSIONS OF REGARD

Tributes of esteem were received from a host of Mr. Farr's friends and business associates. Space does not permit us to print all, but those here given are typical of the letters that came from all parts of the world.

Mr. Farr's death was a great shock to me. Will you accept my real sympathy?

I have not seen him for a long time—several years I think—but I was very fond of him, and had perhaps the best of reasons to be.

I recall one Sunday morning at your house, some years ago, he talked to me about Iowa and the bobolink, and drew from his pockets a letter from a woman out there—a mere peony customer—but she'd written him about Iowa and the bobolink; he tried to read it to me, but he broke down in doing so. I understood, and have never forgotten it.

And now I see you have taken him back to his beloved Iowa and the bobolink.—W.M. W. KLINE.



Bert Farr—the Iowa Boy

We have known Mr. Farr for a great many years, not only in a business way as a customer, but also as a personal friend. This was specially true for our Mr. Karel Van Leeuwen. We are very sure that his death will be mourned by a great many people, and we add our expressions of sympathy to the many which we know you must have received. His death will be a great loss to his friends and to the trade. The work which he has done in regards to the peony we have admired him greatly for; this will live long after he has gone, and will stand as a monument stronger and more sympathetic than any which could be built for him now.—*L. VAN LEEUWEN & SON, Sassenheim, Holland, October 28, 1924.*

In behalf of the Company and myself I want to extend my deepest sympathies. We realize what a keen loss Mr. Farr's death brings both to you and the nursery world, and therefore, please accept our late but nevertheless sincere regrets.—*WARNAAR & Co., Sassenheim, Holland, October 30, 1924.*

Bertrand H. Farr helped mightily to make the world a better place in which to live. No man can do more than this, and Mr. Farr's life of activity with flowers has resulted in leaving a monument to his memory, in a more beautiful world, that will endure for many years. Handicapped by physical infirmity in early life he rose triumphant above discouragements which would have cast down a less determined and buoyant spirit. May his example endure for many years.—*MADISON COOPER, Editor *The Flower Grower*.*

The garden of the American home is richer for Bertrand H. Farr having lived; and, in his passing, he leaves behind him in countless homes memorials that will grow richer and more beautiful with the years. He took intangible idealism and love for flowers and fashioned with these a very real standard by which beauty can be hereafter judged. Each season will bring a fresh remembrance of him, from the earliest blossom of spring to the last sere leaf of autumn. May he rest in peace, content with his labors.—*RICHARDSON WRIGHT, Editor *House and Garden*.*

Mr. Farr has done much for the iris in America, for it is due to him, more than to any other one person or group of persons, that the iris has attained its present popularity here. He was the first to import a collection of modern improved varieties, and the first to place these before the American



Our Office Staff. Mr. E. C. Needham, General Manager; H. G. Seyler, Secretary-Treasurer

gardening public. He was also the first American to breed and introduce new varieties, among the finest of which are Juniata, Mt. Penn, Quaker Lady, Anna Farr, Minnehaha, Montezuma, Seminole, Mary Orth, Georgia, and Mildred Presby.

Mr. Farr's interest in the Iris was, however, only a small part of his love for all hardy plants, and all American gardeners owe him a great debt for his work in making popular and available many hitherto unknown, or little known plants. Those who knew him will never forget his kind spirit of helpfulness. I know I am but one of many to whom his passing means the loss of a very true friend.—*JOHN C. WISTER, President American Iris Society.*

Bertrand H. Farr was a unique figure in American horticulture. Other men have devoted attention to the iris and the peony as he did, but I know none of them who added to the sixth sense of the plant breeder the deep and comprehensive love for all plant life which distinguished Mr. Farr.

Anyone who had to do with Mr. Farr many times in many years, as I had, would agree with me not only as to the pleasure of

the personal contact but as to his possession of that something beyond rules, formulas and experience which reached into the heart of plant life in a fashion that made intercourse a keen pleasure to anyone fortunate enough to have it. He was truly a great plantsman, and he has left among the garden folks of America a great record of acute plant inspiration joined with rugged honesty.—*J. HORACE MCFARLAND.*

My ever present remembrance of Mr. Farr, both as a friend and as a fellow director of the American Iris Society, is his generous spirit expressed quietly, pleasantly, often half-humorously on whatever subject was under discussion. I would forget that he had developed a distinctive business and done perhaps more than any other man to encourage societies devoted to the peony or iris, and think only that here was a fellow gardener, one who shared with me a love of plants. He was not one of these secretive gardeners, sure of the merit of their work and jealous of their methods, but rather a seeker after the best in life and in gardens, eager to share with and learn from others.—*R. S. STURTEVANT.*



Field Forces of Wyomissing Nurseries Co. Mr. George Clouser, Superintendent

